DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS.

III. Public Works Department including Water Works and Drainage ... Rs. 6,47,608.

Dewan Bahadur L. Venkitakrishnan: Sir, I move for a grant of Rs. 15,780 for recoating the bad portion of Alwaye-Edapally road. This was one of the roads that were badly kept and in February last it became necessary to repair it as much as possible. Part of the work has been begun and portions of the road have been recoated. The other portions are being recoated. This expenditure is meant to cover that work.

For Chakkay-Thampanoor extension, Rs. 8,590 are needed. Really, this is not an expenditure but an adjustment. The Chakkay-Thampanoor extension Railway was completed some years ago. While reviewing the accounts, a portion of the money was found to have been spent from the amount set apart for the maintenance of roads. Because it now stands debited to the Railway Department the value has to be credited to the Railway. It is consequently now being written back to the maintenance of roads.

The third item is for special repairs and improvements to the tarred roads in the town of Quilon and the roads used by the vehicles of the Transport Department—Rs. 27,880. The roads in Quilon have deteriorated very much but nothing could be done except cover with metal until we could get materials.

Recently there was a wind-fall. The Government of India have allotted some bitumen to us. This grant is for the cost of metalling these roads and treating them with bitumen.

The 4th item is for supply of small racks to the paper store building in the Government Press premises—Rs. 3,290. A large quantity of paper was supplied to the Government Press by the Punalur Paper Mills. That was stacked on the ground but there was not enough floor space for all of it and it was likely to get damaged. In order to prevent them from damage we had to put up the racks.

The next item is for additional staff for the Trivandrum P. W. D. Division—Rs. 1,368. In reviewing the work of the Trivandrum Division it was found that the works were done badly. On enquiry it was found that it was due to inadequate supervision. So I applied to Government for the formation of an extra sub-division with the requisite subordinate staff, so that the quality of the work may be improved and more attention may be paid to the details of the work. This grant is intended to cover the expenditure or this.

For special repairs to main roads in the State—Rs. 5,16,700. At the beginning of the year a certain amount of extra allotment was allowed.

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[Dewan Bahadur L. Venkatakrishnan.]

Owing to the very large increase in rates and the rapid deterioration that is taking place in a number of roads which had to be repaired, it was found that there was a deficit of about 5 lakhs and odd to meet the heavy work done. This grant is intended to pay the bills that are pending and also to meet the charges for metalling roads during the current year.

For the construction of a new godown at Valiathurai, Trivandrum, for storing food-grains—Rs. 65,000. We put up a large number of temporary sheds for the purpose of storing foodgrains. All of them have been damaged. It is about time that we look forward and do something more permanent. This grant is for covering the portion of the expenditure. It is intended to put up permanent sheds. These are being put up near the Pier Head at Valiathurai so that even after the present need is over they may be used for other purposes.

The last item is for the prevention of water stagnation in front of the quarters of the Excise Subordinates at Thamarakulam—Rs. 9,000. The original estimate was for Rs. 13,000 and odd. If the contractor had been able to show a little more progress we would have been able to finish the work earlier. If he is to be removed at present we would have to call for tenders again and judged from the past experience there is always an increase every time a fresh contract is called for and it is undesirable to do so. Therefore the present contractor has been asked to complete his work and he has to be paid.

I request that the amounts demanded may be sanctioned.

Mr. Paul A. Thallath: May I know the total amount already spent from these grants.

Dewan Bahadur L. Venkatakrishnan: Somewhere about 3 or 4 lakhs.

Mr. K. A. Raman Pillai: I support the supplementary demand. In doing so, I wish to make a few observations. I know that these supplementary demands could not have been made unless they are urgently needed. It goes without saying that the additional amount is sought for, because the original amount sanctioned was either found insufficient or had been spent already.

Under item 6 a sum of Rs. 5 lakhs and odd has been demanded for special repairs to the main roads in the State. Certainly these main roads require special repairs in view of the fact that the main roads are subject to heavy traffic and for other reasons. But the point I wish to emphasize is this: Sufficient attention should also be paid in repairing or in maintaining the feeder roads and the other minor roads in the city as well as in the towns. Of course, there is a cry everywhere for the improvement of the village roads and

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ryot roads. And I am also one with those who agitate for the improvement of the village roads. But that should not leave the impression that the minor roads and the feeder roads and the approach roads in the City and in the towns are in an enviable condition. As a matter of fact, some of these roads, especially those in the City of Trivandrum are in a very miserable condition and it is no exaggeration to say that if a person ventures to walk along some of these, it will be a feat in athletics if he does not tumble down, for there is the prospect of an imminnet fall at every step.

President: Which is this road?

Mr. K. A. Raman Pillai: I am not sure whether I would be in order if I point out any particular road. Sir, I refer in particular to the road that starts from Pulimoodu, and runs westwards and goes by the side of the Vanchiyoor tank. If the Chief Engineer sees that road I am sure he will have no peace of mind.

All this is because there is no well-arranged plan with regard to the maintenance of these minor roads and feeder roads. The repairs and maintenance works are done in a very haphazard manner, according to the pressure brought to bear upon the P. W. D. If a particular road is in a very miserable condition, the inference is that there is no influential person in that locality. I strongly feel that there should be a definite plan for the improvement of these minor roads. Otherwise many of the roads that really require repairs would remain unrepaired for centuries. It may be a four year-plan or a five year-plan. With these few words I support the demand.

Mr. N. Narayana Kurup: Whatever may be the amount required for the maintenance or repair of the main roads or the village roads in the State, we are prepared to grant it without a demur. But if any one were to travel through the length and breadth of the country, I think he will be convinced that the money budgetted for maintenance of roads has not been properly used or completely used for the work. I would invite you, Sir, to trave along all these roads to be convinced of my allegations. If you make a journey along these roads without a previous published programme, you will dismiss all the officers of the Department including the Chief Engineer, for not maintaining roads properly. The roads are dirty and slippery and it is impossible for vehicles or even pedestrians to use them. There is, for instance, the Alleppey-Quilon Road from Thottappally to Chavara which is a very important road. Almost three-fourths of that road is thoroughly hopeless. It requires about one pound of good Ayurvedic ghee for a man to recoupe his health after a journey along these roads in any vehicle.

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President: I think I made a journey over this particular road quite recently,

Mr. N. Narayana Kurup: But the difficulty is this. You go with a previous programme and then the officers of the department make some temporary repairs.

President: I have now given instructions that neither the Police nor any other head of department nor the District Magistrate should know previously by which road I will travel.

Mr. N. Narayana Kurup: Very unfortunately, they know it anyway, Sir. Therefore I request the Chief Engineer to give strict instructions to the subordinates whether Executive Engineers or Sub-Division Officers or Section Officers to see that the full amount allotted for maintenance is spent on roads and also to undertake inspection tours to cover each mile of the roads in Travancore. This is the only remark that I have to make on this demand. With the hope that the amounts will be spent in 1120 itself, I support the demand.

Mr. T. M. Chidambarathanu Pillai (*Thovala* cum *Agastiswaram*): Sir, I am concerned with the roads and by roads in South Travancore. I place before the House that the road from Nagercoil to Rajakamangalam is in a very deplorable condition and that the road running from Nagercoil to Azhakiapandiapurom which bears a large amount of motor traffic and the road from Bhoothapandy to Aramboly another very important road are also in a bad condition. There is a suggestion by the Department that agencies formed of the people from villages, such as Co-operative Societies or Joint Stock Companies must take the responsibility of these roads and the Government will be prepared to give them the work on contract system.

President: Order, order. The suggestion was this. Government have now arrived at the following decisions. Firstly the question of lapse of funds will not arise. There will be a three year programme in regard to the roads and other public works, so that whatever portion of the amount allotted for the year is not spent, will be carried forward instead of lapsing. It was also in the mind of Government to discourage the custom of the department suddenly beginning works at the end of the year, after a period of inactivity. That is the first point.

The second point is that Government have come to the conclusion that the present and post war reconstruction programmes in regard to roads and irrigation works are so multifarious and so extensive that Government have to concentrate upon some aspects of that work alone. So Government made it clear, and speaking for myself, I have been placing that before everybody, that it is hoped that village roads, village communications including bridges, building of village schools and so forth will be taken up by the

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people of the villages, forming themselves into Co-operative Societies or Joint Stock Companies or other Societies, utilising local capitalists, local engineering talents--retired officers of the Engineering department—and also local enthusiasm. If such institutions should come into existence, Government are prepared to hand over the requisite money to them on terms to be settled by agreement so as to ensure the utilisation of that money in the proper way, the P. W. D's function in the matter being merely supervisory. I have been saying that, I do not know on how many occasions and to how many people. But I have not been able to receive any enthusiastic response. I do not expect, of course, hundreds of Joint Stock Companies starting all over the state. Let me take, for instance, the South Travancore locality or the locality which Mr. Narayana Kurup mentioned. Supposing there is a retired Assistant Engineer, supposing there is a person who has made money either from rubber or tea or cardamom in the locality, why should not they pool their resources and take up these contracts and get more money? That has been the idea which has been put to various honourable members of this House. I am hoping yet some response will be forthcoming. Otherwise I do not see any hope of a postwar reconstruction scheme. If the Department of Public Works is to look after the village communications and the village schools, especially when compulsory primary education is enforced, nothing will be done, because big roads will be neglected on the ground that village roads have to be attended to and village roads are likely to be neglected because big roads have to be attended to. I therefore felt that these facts may be borne in mind when honourable members discuss this matter. I hope that by the budget session I shall be able to get some offers at least. I am perfectly willing to hand over 10 to 50 thousand rupees to local organisations for maintenance of the village roads and construction of schools.

I want to say this also. I have now made a declaration and have communicated it to the British Government that the various persons who are doing work of paramount importance, namely the military—there are about 70 to 80,000 Travancoreans engaged in military service—and there are also about 60 to 70,000 labourers who have built roads and bridges under very difficult and trying conditions in Burma and in malarial tracts and hilly parts—that these people must be utilised for that purpose. This Government are under a promise to settle those people in their own villages. Honourable members may keep these aspects in view and put forward constructive suggestions which will be welcome to Government.

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Mr. T. M. Chidambarathanu Pillai: Sir, but the present condition of the roads deserve considerable attention on the part of the department. And there is also this difficulty. It is felt by the contractors who take up works and also by the people, that if a contractor is entrusted with a work, and that if he finishes that work, the bills are not paid promptly. There is, of course, a circular that a bill should not be pending payment for more than 90 days. But as a matter of fact, the payment is made years after the works are completed. Therefore contractors are diffident of taking up contracts and people are nervous to take up such a venture.

Again we find that the department is even now adhering to old rates for contractors' charges. Nowadays when we know that labour is very costly and when the wages are about one to one-and-a-half rupees a day, the rate that the department allows is only about 5½ fanams. With such rates the contractors will not be able to do the work. The department is adopting the rates that were used in 1934 and 1935.

Mr. K. S. Joseph (*Mavelikara and Thiruvalla* cum *Pathanamthitta*): I just want to point out a fact. I had sent an interpellation asking for a copy of ryots roads rules, so that what you suggested just now about societies being registered which would take up the work of constructing and improving ryots roads might be worked. We hear complaints about ryots roads. In my own constituency, I have received three or four representations from the villagers who constructed roads and applied to Government to take up the maintenance of those roads. The reply that they received was that these roads were not constructed in conformity with the ryots roads rules. I asked one of these parties to write to Government for a copy of the rules. So far it has not been forthcoming.

President: When was the letter written?

Mr. K. S. Joseph: I think in Medom. There was a letter from the Assistant Engineer, Mavelikara sub-division to the people of Keezhputhoor village saying that they did not construct the roads in conformity with the rules. They asked the Engineer for a copy of the rules. But they could not get one.

I understand that there is a clause in these rules, which says that the society should be a registered society. One or two parties, I believe, tried this experiment. But unfortunately, there is no rule under which these could be registered. The Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies says that the fees for the registration of the company is Rs. 40. But under the provisions of the rules it is only Rs. 5. So nobody knows how to register and where to register the society.

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I had asked a question as to how many societies have been registered under the Ryots Road rules after that Regulation was put into force. Unfortunately that question has not been answered today, for the answer of that would have helped very much in adding to the discussion with advantage.

The Chief Engineer has asked for a big sum of Rs. 6 lakhs and odd for repairs, as I could see from the list, mainly on main roads. It is surprising that the Chief Engineer had not thought of the smaller roads, ryots roads especially, where the rates remain as old as 20 or 30 years ago when they were first made.

President: Have not the rates been modified?

Dewan Bahadur L. Venkitakrishnan: The estimates for Rs. 2000 are now coming up for Rs. 15 to 20 thousand and therefore the honourable member is not correct on that matter.

Mr. K. S. Joseph: I will give a specific instance. Last year the Ayroor Village Panchayat took over the maintenance of the roads in their village area. They entrusted the work to some of the contractors who did the work on some roads. Their bills are pending payment because of the difficulty which the department finds in enhancing the rates. That is why I specifically now point out that it was unfortunate that the Chief Engineer did not find it necessary to increase the budget for improvement of the ryots roads. I wish he had included that item also and I hope he would include it hereafter.

Mr. G. Ravi Varma (*Trivandrum and Nedumangad* cum *Chirayinkil*): Sir, first of all I had not thought of speaking on the demand. But to my question this morning, the Chief Engineer answered that all the money granted in this year's budget has been spent under repairs and maintenance for all the roads of the State. But I find in my constituency, in one of the taluks, namely Chirayinkil, only 30 per cent. of the amount was spent till Edavam this year. If at all the money has not been spent, I think that fund must have been diverted to some other work for other roads of the State. I want an elucidation from the Chief Engineer whether all the amounts have been spent on the roads in that constituency. From my experience also I find that all the village roads in that taluk have not been cared at all for the past one year in the matter of maintenance. If I am correct—my opinion seems to be correct—only 30 per cent. of the amount allotted for maintenance and repairs has been spent for all the roads of that taluk.

With regard to the ryots roads, I endorse all the observations of the honourable members of this House who stood up before me.

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[Mr. G. Ravi Varma]

As regards the amount asked for towards special repairs to main roads in the State, I wish to know from the Chief Engineer in what portions of the main roads of the State, all this money has to be spent. I think there are 300 miles of main roads in all, in the North, Central and South Travancore besides the Main Central road. I do not find any necessity for spending more money at the fag end of the year on the main roads towards maintenance and repairs. I want elucidation from the Chief Engineer as to which and what portions of the roads are to be repaired now.

Mr. K. G. Narayana Panickar: Sir, in supporting the Demand, I have to add a word. Lands are usually surrendered to the Land Revenue Department by the people. As for instance in Thiruvella taluk, lands have already been surrendered and trees on such lands have been given on kuthagapattom and the tenants have begun to pay taxes. Still the Engineering department have not thought of doing any maintenance on the roads of the village side. Evidently the Revenue department has not surrendered the lands acquired for the purpose to the P. W. D. I request that Government may make the necessary arrangements for the lands being taken over by the P. W. D. and the work proceeded with as early as possible. I also submit that the department may make a list of such lands not being surrendered by the Land Revenue Department in other areas as well, for the purpose of constructing ryots roads and after getting the same, the P. W. D. may make the necessary roads as urgently as possible. I also learn that there is a test case pending in the Mavelikara District Court in respect of the ryots roads affair.

Dewan Bahadur L. Venkitakrishnan: The essential thing that has been raised here is about the maintenance and improvements that have to be carried out to main roads for which the funds have been asked for. I may at once explain to the House how we arrived at this figure of Rs. 6 lakhs and odd. Immediately after I came over here, I found that piecemeal alterations of grants were being asked for by the various Divisional officers early in each month. They were also asking every fortnight or thereabout for the transfer of some fund to one work or another and re-transfer of such funds back to the original work and so on. So much so, I found there was no regular system being followed in the matter of repairs to roads. Then I insisted that my officers review the accounts every month and asked them to send me a consolidated statement of their requirements every month. This was going on for a couple of months. Even so, a number of alterations were made in the grants, that indicated that adequate attention had not been paid to the working of grants and things were inclined to drift. Then I asked my officers to send estimates every

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quarter so that I may review exactly what the position is. In the last quarter which was really the quarter for the revised budget for 1120 and which was the time for doing most of the work on repairs and maintenance to roads, I asked my officers to give a categorical assurance as to the amount of money that has been actually spent, the amount of liabilities incurred in the work, the details of the money that has not been disbursed to the contractor on a particular work and so forth and the balance of work that remained to be done and will be done during the year. It is for these items of work this demand of Rs. 6 lakhs and odd is needed. Secondly this amount is required virtually to meet liabilities that have been incurred. This money is also required for payment for the material which was utilised for the maintenance and repairs on roads. That includes not only main roads, all the branch roads and village roads as well. Although unfortunately the expression 'main' has managed to creep in which has brought a lot of controversy, the amounts are needed for the items detailed in the list.

With reference to the village roads, I have been saying from the beginning that only very little money has been allotted for improvement to these roads. I also noticed that most of the moneys were charged on work establishment employees of the offices who were really not doing any work. In a few cases I found that most of the grants for village roads had been spent on those people. I stopped that procedure so that money may be utilised on the village roads from now onward at least. I have requested that people living on the village sides may take up this kind of work so that every pie earmarked for ryots roads may be spent exclusively on the road itself. In response to my appeal, only one of the honourable members Mr. Joseph of the Assembly has induced a Bus company who have promised to take about 12 miles of road and see to the maintenance of the same, with the allotment that has been assigned for it. That is the only offer I have had so far. I hope as the Dewan President adverted to this morning that private co-operative organisations who will come up can be entrusted with the construction of village roads and bridges. If such bodies come forward, Government will be prepared to hand over all the work connected with the villages to the villagers themselves. Of course such bodies will have to take up the work for the money allotted to that item of work or for such moneys this House has agreed upon. The work of the P. W. D. will be purely advisory in character. The villagers can employ their own labour and have their own contractors. They can utilise their material and all the rest of it. After all this work is a very simple one which requires very little of technical help and if any technical help becomes necessary, the P. W. D. will be very ready to offer that. It is then possible to sanction the estimates for village roads under this

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[Dewan Bahadur L. Venkitakrishnan]

scheme very quickly and get the work executed without delay. I only appeal for the co-operation of the people in this matter and more help from the public means more work turned out for the villagers at minimum cost.

The demand was put to vote and carried.

The demand was passed and the grant made.

DEMAND IV.—GENERAL ADMINISTRATION, EXCLUDING FINANCIAL SECRETARIAT, ACCOUNTANT GENERALS OFFICE AND LOCAL FUND AUDIT DEPARTMENT.

Mr. G. Narayanan Tampi (*Secretary to Government*): Sir, I rise to move for a supplementary grant not exceeding Rs. 4,000, under Demand IV—General Administration, excluding Financial Secretariat, Accountant Generals office and Local Fund Audit Department.

This amount is required for meeting the additional expenditure under, Travancore Information and Listener. The honourable House knows that this is an important publicity organ of the Travancore Government. The sum of Rs. 3,000 provided in the Budget for making blocks for printing photographs has been expended. The cost has gone up by 100 to 200 per cent. Orinally, it used to be only 4 annas per Sq. inch whereas we have now to pay from 8 to 12 annas per Sq. inch. Again, the price of photographic materials has gone up considerably. So, with the utmost possible economy which is exercised in this behalf, it has been found impossible to meet the pending claims. There are also further payments to be made during the remaining part of the year. I may also submit, for the information of the House that this was not anticipated at the time of the commencement of the year so as to have avoided this additional demand. The pending demands are of so pressing a nature that payments cannot possibly be put off to the next year. I would therefore, request that the House may be pleased to sanction the demand.

The demand was put to vote and carried.

The demand was passed and the grant made.

DEMAND VI—GENERAL ADMINISTRATION—LEGISLATIVE BODIES.

Mr. C. P. Gopala Panickar: Sir, I beg to move for a grant not exceeding Rs. 4,500 under Demand VI—General Administration, Legislative Bodies.

It consists of two parts, one for additional allotment on account of bye-election charges and remuneration to election commissioners and the other for allotment under Legislative Bodies for the purchase of books and furniture for the Library.

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